

**STAY AT HOME - STAY WELL**  
**FEBRUARY, 2021 NEWSLETTER – CORONAVIRUS VERSION**

**“Hope Does Not Disappoint Us”**  
**- Romans 5:1-5**



*From the Minister...*

February brings slightly longer days, and I know we all welcome the return of the light....and the rollout of vaccinations that eventually will allow us to meet in person. Our Reopening Task Team is monitoring all the relevant statistics to be sure we are safe.

Also in February is our annual **Blanket Sunday on February 14 – a collection for Church World Service’s Blanket and Tools of Hope program** that assists people in need around the world. You’ll find an article with details on the program and how you can donate; on our website, we’ll have a link so that you can contribute online and have that contribution registered as coming via North Church. For those who don’t have internet access, you can mail your donation, marked “Blanket Sunday” to the church and we will take it from there. Know that you are helping so many people in so many ways when you do this!

**February 17<sup>th</sup> is Ash Wednesday and the start of LENT 2021. Our theme is “The Upside-down Kingdom”** as we remember and celebrate that Jesus came to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is at hand. He demonstrated in word and deed a Kingdom unlike any other, one that puts the last first, as described in the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-31). Allegiance to this kingdom is demonstrated by how one lifts up the last and least, the helpless and the hopeless, by doing for others as you would have them do for you.

**Throughout Lent, we’ll be thinking about the implications of this Kingdom, and how we can help it to be manifested in the world around us. Although a common custom** is to give something up for Lent, we’ve had to give up so much over the past year in the face of a global pandemic; therefore, this year we’ll be thinking about what we add to our lives, what we’ve learned about the life of faith in this context, what things we’ll want to return to and what things we’ll want to do in a new way.

Details about our online Lenten services and two parking lot opportunities, to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, and Palms and more on March 27<sup>th</sup>, are in the Lenten Brochure attached to this newsletter, and on our website. In all these activities, we will be following Jesus’ call to repent and believe the Good News. **Repentance is exercising a mindfulness about ourselves and our behavior; it is not self-disgust, but rather, an opening of heart and mind that allows us to walk in the light of God’s love.**

I hope you'll take to heart this path of mindfulness and discovery of what we are called to do and be over the seven weeks before Easter, as we continue to be the Body of Christ for the sake of the world, no matter where we are, no matter how we worship.



*Faithfully,*

*Rev. Mary E. Biedron*

## *Moderator's Notes...*

The first month of 2021 is nearly complete. I think we all hoped that with the change of the calendar we could put the sadness and loss and strife of 2020 behind us.

But the new year started with the horrific events of January 6. We looked on as a mob stormed and occupied our Capitol Building, forced Congress into hiding, vandalized our legislature's chambers and offices, injured scores of police, and killed one officer. And as if that were not enough, we have learned of new strains of the coronavirus that are more infectious.

Yet there are signs of hope. The coronavirus vaccine is being administered at an increasing pace. The Covid-19 metrics in Michigan – cases, hospitalizations, deaths – are all improving rapidly. A new Administration took office during a peaceful inauguration day. North Church people continue to help others and make a difference, such as serving at Crossroads last week.

As Christians, we need to remember Jesus' teachings during these trying times. Christ taught us not to hate our enemies but to love them. He taught us to disdain violence as a solution. He taught us to listen to and care for one another. And the message of both the Old and New Testaments echoes our theme for the year – hope will not disappoint us.

Last month I summarized the results of our survey of the Congregation on how we are doing as a 'virtual' Church, and on opinions regarding returning to in-person worship. We are all anxious to return to our building and sanctuary on Sundays and to enjoy the fellowship of being together. I will be monitoring the status of the pandemic in our state and in Oakland County, and reviewing this and other data with our Reopening Task Team, Executive Council, and our Senior Minister. We will all work to strike the right balance between safety and returning to worship in person as soon as possible.

Through all this, the work of the Church continues. Rev. Biedron continues her virtual Sunday worship and Wednesday inspiration series. We continue to support charities such as Crossroads and other benevolences.

### **Executive Council Notes**

Executive Council met on January 25 and considered the following:



- **Assets & Resources:** This Board and our Treasurer continue to monitor our Church finances. We finished 2020 with revenues from pledges and other sources down \$36,600 from the prior year, expenses down \$23,200, for a net decline in performance of \$13,400. This was more than offset by our PPP loan of \$43,700. North Church may be eligible for a second PPP loan; A&R, our Treasurer, and our Business Manager are following up.

You will learn more about our finances and the budget for 2021 at our upcoming Business Meeting.

*Please complete and submit your pledges for 2021, either via mail-in card or on the Church website. This is vital input into our budgeting for this year.*

- **Diaconate:** The Diaconate continues to reach out with cards and phone calls to our shut-in members and friends – they are looking for some volunteers to help with this activity (check out the planner and emails from the Church).
- **Education:** Virtual Sunday School continues to go well. The Board is looking at new curriculum materials for Sunday School this year. The Education Board will be preparing craft packets for Lent.
- **Fellowship:** Our Fellowship Board has planned a Church wine and cheese tasting for early February – see the Church website. Fellowship is also working with other Boards on another parking lot event for Easter.
- **Missions:** Blanket Sunday is February 14 – look to the Church planner and website for more information.
- **Worship:** The Board is looking ahead to Lent. We will still be worshiping remotely, but we are planning parking lot events for Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday. Again, see the Church planner and website for more information
- **New Business:**
  - We will have our Annual Business Meeting on **January 31**, wherein the Congregation will be called upon to approve the budget for 2021. Please attend!
  - We will not be hosting SOS this year; Lighthouse is in the process of reviewing the program and its structure (they have been hosting their guests in hotels instead of volunteer churches). We will continue to support Lighthouse and review next year.
  - The 2021 Program Meeting will be **June 27**. It is normally in May, but since it was delayed to September last year this gives the current Board members a bit more time in office.
  - Council approved purchasing a new laptop for our Sr. Minister; with the demands of video recording and Facebook Live for Sunday worship and Wednesday messages, Rev. Biedron found her old machine has reached its limits.
  - I presented the report of the Futures Task Team to Council. This Team started working in October of 2019. There was a pause during much of 2020 due to the pandemic, but the Team reconvened recently and completed its work. The Team made several

recommendations and suggestions aimed at increasing attendance, new visitors, and members. The Team will be working with the Ministry Boards to take the recommendations forward.



*“You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.” For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinion and under his wings you will find refuge...” (Psalm 91)*

**Kevin Gromley**

**North Congregational Church  
2020 Year End Financial Summary  
December 31, 2020**

|                                   | <b>Year-to-Date<br/>Total</b> | <b>Year-to-Date<br/>Budget</b> | <b>Percent<br/>Difference<br/>vs. Budget</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Budget</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <u>Income</u>                     |                               |                                |  |                          |
| Pledges                           | 187,683                       | 191,000                        | -1.7%  | 191,000                  |
| Other Income                      | 22,421                        | 52,300                         | -57.1%                                       | 52,300                   |
| Paycheck Protection Loan*         | 43,700                        | 0                              |  | 0                        |
| <b>Operating Income</b>           | <b>253,804</b>                | <b>243,300</b>                 | <b>4.3%</b>                                  | <b>243,300</b>           |
| <u>Expenses</u>                   |                               |                                |  |                          |
| Payroll & Benefits                | 234,516                       | 241,581                        | -2.9%  | 241,581                  |
| Christian Fellowship & Library    | 1,907                         | 2,405                          | -20.7%                                       | 2,405                    |
| Music                             | 25,504                        | 25,504                         | 0.0%   | 25,504                   |
| Office                            | 8,781                         | 10,460                         | -16.1%                                       | 10,460                   |
| Building Maintenance              | 46,027                        | 75,820                         | -39.3%                                       | 75,820                   |
| Grounds Maintenance               | 12,807                        | 21,000                         | -39.0%                                       | 21,000                   |
| Utilities and Insurance           | 39,128                        | 44,800                         | -12.7%                                       | 44,800                   |
| Diaconate, including Benevolences | 36,000                        | 36,000                         | 0.0%   | 36,000                   |
| Other                             | 17,013                        | 24,096                         | -29.4%                                       | 24,096                   |
| <b>Operating Expenses</b>         | <b>421,683</b>                | <b>481,666</b>                 | <b>-12.5%</b>                                | <b>481,666</b>           |

Notes

\* We have met all the requirements for the \$43,700.00 Paycheck Protection Loan to be fully forgiven.

## ***BOARD MEETINGS:***

Education Ministry Board – by Zoom on Monday, February 8, at 7 p.m.

Diaconate Ministry Board – by Zoom on Tuesday, February 9, at 7:30 p.m.

Assets & Resources Ministry Board – by Zoom on Wednesday, February 10, at 7 p.m.

Missions Ministry Board – by Zoom on Sunday, February 14, at 11:30 a.m.

Fellowship Ministry Board – by Zoom on Tuesday, February 16 at 7 p.m.

Worship Ministry Board – by Zoom on Sunday, February 21, at 11:30 a.m.

Executive Council – by Zoom on Monday, February 22, at 7 p.m.



## ***FELLOWSHIP GROUPS:***

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB has suspended going to Moe's on Ten until further notice.

BOOK GROUP on Zoom, Wednesday, February 10 at 1:00 p.m. (Please see article)

MASCOT'S – Meets via Zoom. If you would like to be included in the invitation email list for future meetings, please contact **Danny Hawkins**, [NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com](mailto:NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com).

Got an idea for a virtual fellowship? Interested in leading a Bible study or a class on zoom? Speak with **Rev. Biedron** or Program Director **Danny Hawkins**.

## ***CHEESE AND WINE TASTING***

The Fellowship Ministry Board invites you to join them on **Friday, February 5th** for a virtual Cheese and Wine tasting event. We have worked with The Cheese Lady in downtown Farmington to put together a virtual Zoom meeting party exclusively for North Congregational Church members. We will be pairing 2 bottles of California wine with 4 different cheeses. There will be an expert from the wine company to give us background and information on each of the wines and why they pair well with the cheeses. The Cheese Lady herself will also be part of the event to give us information on each cheese. Several NCC members have participated in previous events put on by The Cheese Lady. It is a lot of fun. Come hang out with your fellow NCC members and enjoy some wine and cheese. Here are the details:

**When: Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m.**

**Where: Zoom via The Cheese Lady**

**Cost: \$65**

### **How it works:**

1. Sign up by sending your name and email address to **Tim Sirovy**, [timsirovy@gmail.com](mailto:timsirovy@gmail.com) or 248-877-0171, **by February 1<sup>st</sup>**.
2. Everyone will pick up their wine and cheese from The Cheese Lady shop in downtown Farmington on Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup> or Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup>.
3. There is a \$65 fee that can be paid when you pick up your bags of wine and cheese.
4. You will receive a Zoom link from the Cheese Lady so you can join the party at 6:30, Friday evening. We are limited to 30 participants (Zoomers) so sign up soon!



### ***MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB***

As of January 11th, the Breakfast Club suspended their breakfast meetings at Moe's on 10 until further notice.

### ***FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY BOARD***

We will be putting together a NCC Recipe Book over the next couple of months. We are asking members to start collecting your favorite comfort food/winter warm-up recipes such as chilis, soups and stews. More details will be coming soon on where to submit them. Thanks!

### ***MISSIONS MINISTRY BOARD***

What do you have on your calendar for **Sunday, March 14**? Turn your clock ahead 1 hour for daylight savings time! Anything else? If not, how about coming to Crossroads to work with your North Church family in preparing a great meal for some of the neediest people in Detroit. We probably won't be back in the sanctuary by the middle of March, and hopefully many of us will have received our Covid vaccinations by then. We will be practicing social distancing, mask wearing and frequent hand washing while preparing and serving some delicious homemade chili, and 2 hotdogs on buns. It's a little change from the usual soup and sandwich, but change can be fun in these unprecedented times. Of course, we are going to need your delicious, homemade cookies for dessert, packaged 2 cookies/baggie.

Due to the restrictions on the number of volunteers we can accommodate at Crossroads, North Church will not be partnering with the Farmington Muslim Mosque for this event. **We will need about 10 volunteers for the morning shift, and between 10-12 volunteers for the afternoon shift.** Since the pandemic, we have been running an abbreviated day at Crossroads, starting to serve lunch at 11:00am. **The morning shift will run from 8:15am - 10:30am, and the afternoon shift will run from 10:30-2pm.** Unlike past years, we are now usually cleaned up and out the door by 2pm. Whether you can make cookies (we need 67 dozen cookies), or are able to come down to Crossroads to work, please visit the NCC website - a signup genius will be coming soon!

### **P.S.**

If you are able to work the morning shift, and have swimming goggles, please bring them with you! We will need some brave and strong volunteers to chop onions for the hot dog toppings :)



## ***BOOK GROUP – Wednesday, February 10, 1:00 p.m. on Zoom***

Our February book is *A Life Without Water* by Marci Bolden. This novel tells the story of Carol Denman, who divorced her husband over twenty years ago and has never looked back. But on the day before their daughter's thirtieth birthday, John barges back into Carol's life with a request that threatens the fragile stability she has built. He is gravely sick. While he still can, he has some amends to make and some promises to fulfill. But to do that, he not only needs his ex-wife's agreement...he needs her. With the past hovering between them, Carol and John embark on a decades-overdue road trip. Together they plunge back into a "life without water"...but which may ultimately set them free.



This book is available in paperback and e-book editions. Come join the conversation, as we always look at what role grace has in the stories we encounter!

For zoom information, see the weekly church planner or contact **Rev. Biedron** at [ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com](mailto:ncc.seniorminister@gmail.com)

## ***BLANKET SUNDAY – February 14***

In times of crisis such as a flood, tornado, or hurricane, receiving a blanket fulfills a basic human need for comfort and shelter. In 2019, Church World Service distributed 118,000 blankets and hygiene kits to families. Your gift of \$10 provides a blanket, \$50 can supply blankets for an entire family.

Blanket Sunday contributions by members of North Congregational Church have supplied more than 340 blankets through our contributions over the past 7 years. Please make a donation for Blanket Sunday by,

- Sending a check to North Congregational Church with "blanket" in the memo line, or
- Using the following link, <https://fundraise.cwsglobal.org/north-congregational-blankets>, which will take you directly to **Donate Now** (top of the page, right side).

## ***DIACONATE BENEVOLENCES for February, 2021***

SBP (formerly St. Bernard Project)

## ***REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR***

A heartfelt thank you was extended to North Congregational church January 4th by volunteers of Lighthouse of Pontiac as they unloaded a trunk-load of groceries and other items. The items were gathered as a result of the Reverse Advent Calendar. Food cupboard shelves are often bare following the holiday season. A volunteer at the cupboard said the need for help from Lighthouse has increased manifold during the COVID crisis. Thank you to the families who participated in this Advent food drive!

## **WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP**

Thank you to everyone for contributing to our Sock Drive and Knitting Tree Project. We received 314 pairs of socks, of every size, color and style. 157 hats, mittens, gloves, scarves and earmuffs came in for the Knitting Tree. All of the items were donated to Crossroads, which met their request for these items. All of the donations will be appreciated during our cold weather months. We appreciate the spirit of giving by our church members and friends.



## **ASSISTANCE AND DONATIONS**

### **North Congregational Church: COVID-19 Helping our Parishioners**

We may have people in our congregation who are unable to acquire food or medications on their own - either because of mobility limitations, illness, or underlying health issues - during the COVID-19 outbreak. **Danny Hawkins** has coordinated a group of people who are willing to make NO CONTACT deliveries to these parishioners to provide for some of their basic needs. Please contact **Danny** at 248 217-1750 or [NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com](mailto:NCC.BusinessManager@gmail.com) if you are a parishioner in need of a food or pharmacy delivery.

**Food Banks:** To find a food bank in your community, please visit the following websites:

- \* Feeding America: [www.feedingamerica.org/takeaction/coronavirus?s\\_onsite\\_promo=lightbox](http://www.feedingamerica.org/takeaction/coronavirus?s_onsite_promo=lightbox)
- \* Meals on Wheels: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals)
- \* Gleaners Community Food Bank: Distribution sites for families and children in Metro Detroit
- \* Lighthouse: [www.lighthousemi.org/update-on-covid-19/](http://www.lighthousemi.org/update-on-covid-19/)

**Days for Girls:** Meets at His Church Anglican, 34500 6 Mile Road, Livonia, MI. We will take a break for Christmas and New Year, and Wednesday, January 6.

**We are back in the face mask business till the end of January!** Floating Doctors is hoping to get 10,000 masks to distribute in Panama. Panama citizens are not allowed to leave their homes without one. A disposable mask costs about \$1.00 and the average income is about \$2-3.

### **CARES of Farmington Hills:**

Serves Farmington, Farmington Hills (248-474-8231), Southfield, Redford, Livonia, Novi, Northville, and West Bloomfield.

**Food Pantry Hours are listed - You must call for an appointment.**

- \* Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:30am - 2:30pm
- \* Thursday, 9:30am - 2:30pm; 5:00pm - 6:30pm
- \* Saturday, 9:30am - 11:30am

### **Salvation Army: Grocery and food, including meat**

- \* Monday – Friday – 9 AM – 3 PM **Emergency Food Assistance by appointment.** Please call ahead of the time and make an appointment, so the food bag will be ready to grab and go.)
- \* Wednesday – 10 AM – 12 PM (Drive thru Food assistance – groceries and meat)
- \* Thursday – 4 :30 PM – 5 PM – Drive thru grab and go dinner to add on to the food bags.



**S.O.U.L. (Source of Universal Love): Food and necessary items**

- \* Alcohol, Lysol, Hand Sanitizer, Antibacterial Wipes, Disposable Gloves
- \* Non-perishable Food
- \* Gift cards for Food or Gas
- \* Order on Amazon and your donation will be delivered directly to SOUL.  
[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1IAO7BVZ1TLPM?ref=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1IAO7BVZ1TLPM?ref=wl_share)